RESTORATION REVIEW

Leroy Garrett, Editor

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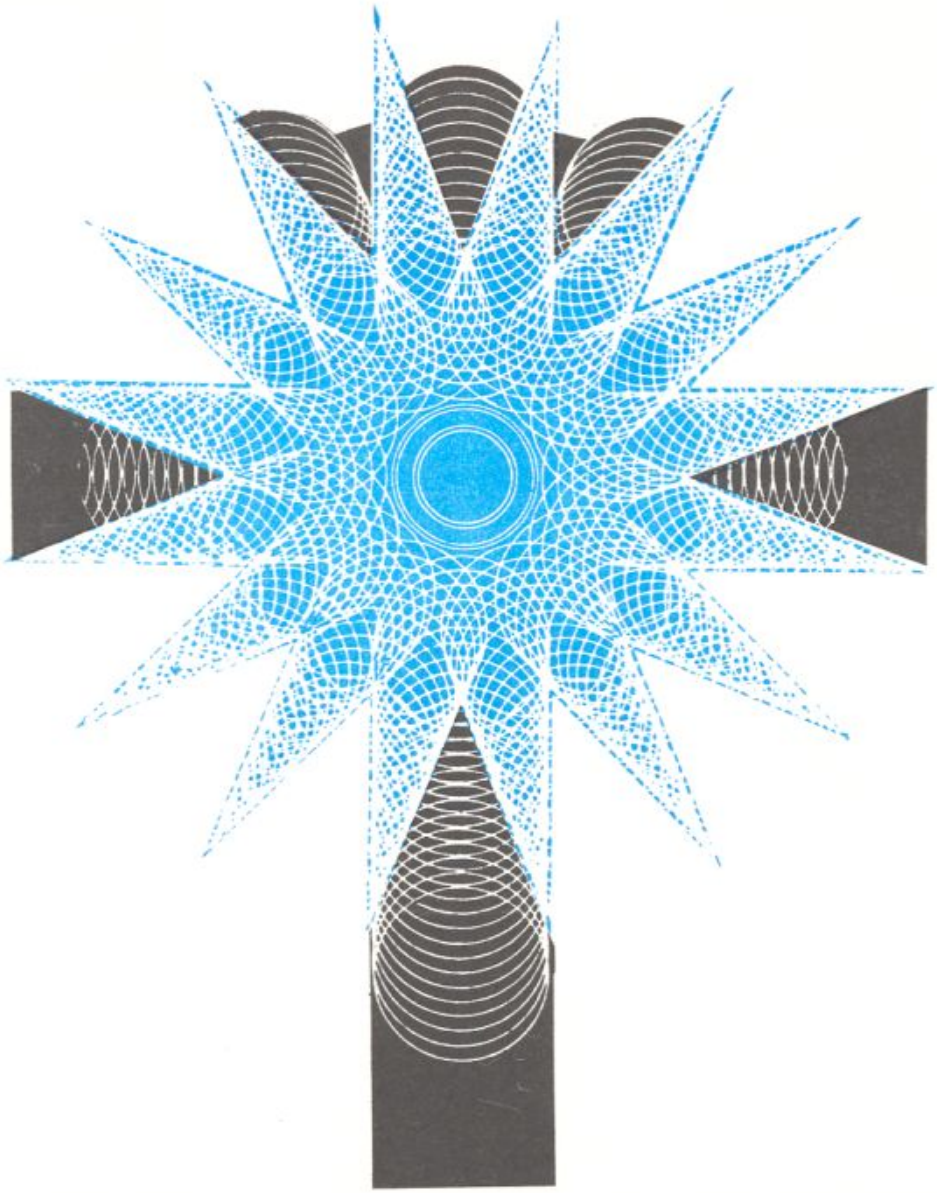

Jesus is the supreme Head of the church, which is His body, filled with Himself, the Author and Giver of everything everywhere. – *Eph. 1:22-23*

Volume 15, No. 8 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **October 1973**

The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today . . .

THE GREAT LOST SECRET OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

A little tract by W. J. Pethybridge, published by Bethany Fellowship, has a title similar to the one above, and it says some things that I want to incorporate in this piece. After recounting the story of how the early church took the gospel throughout the Graeco-Roman world even amidst hardship and persecution, Mr. Pethybridge points to three factors that he believes reveal the secret of this amazing accomplishment. These are: (1) their evangelism was a ministry of the Holy Spirit rather than "human teaching," (2) their meetings were in homes rather than church buildings, and (3) the primitive disciples saw themselves as members of the Body of Christ rather than individual believers.

He observes that even though the apostles had long been taught by Jesus, they were not ready for a dynamic ministry until "the new invisible Teacher," the Holy Spirit, came into their lives. "When he is come, even the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth" is a promise that Jesus made not only to the apostles but to all who witness for him, Pethybridge believes. He supports this with a reference to 1 John 2:27, which is for believers generally: "The anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him."

The author insists that this does not discount the importance of human channels, but the *source* must always be the Spirit. And one of his comments indicates that the Spirit's teaching is a matter of illuminating what is already revealed in the Scriptures, for he advises believers to "share the meditations they have received of Christ and His ways, turn to some passage of Scripture suggested by the Spirit, and trust Him to teach them from it." He is also critical of those sects who "claim some extra revelation beyond the Bible." Needless to say he believes in a Spirit-filled and a Spirit-led ministry, and sees the lack of this as one big reason why the modern church has not even kept up with population growth in winning the world for Jesus.

A large part of the secret of the success of the early church was the motivation they received from gatherings in homes, Pethybridgc insists. They had no special church buildings, so the various homes of believers were their meeting places. He points to Acts 2:46: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts," and to the four references to "the church in thy house." He finds 20 instances in Acts and the letters where the saints had meetings in homes. They did give testimony in the temple and in the streets and synagogues, but they did not "go to church" to some building set apart for that purpose.

The author lists the advantages these home meetings were to the early saints, suggesting that we lose a great deal when we do not do likewise.

1. Everybody can know each other and really enjoy brotherhood in the Spirit in small home meetings. The relationship is warm and vital and less formal.

2. Everybody can take part and are more likely to do so. The Body of Christ can really function as a body, with every part working, as the scriptures teach us it should.

3. A great deal of money and time is saved that can be spent in a more important way, such as helping the poor and preaching the gospel.

4. There is never any "growth" problems, which causes a church to tear down one "barn" and build a bigger one. When a house group outgrows one home, it only means that another group starts in another home.

5. It solves the problem of special clothes for a special place, which a big deal in lots of places. Home gatherings tend to make people just as they are.

6. Ministry in the home overcomes much of the temptation to self-importance on the part of the leadership. Believers in a circle in a private atmosphere tend to be equal and to share mutually, virtually obliterating such differences as exist between clergy and laity.

7. Special buildings nearly always involves the practice of a special person as minister, and so we get what Pethybridge calls the "one-man ministry," which prevents the full exercise of the priesthood of all believers. The house church overcomes this.

8. If it is best for a congregation to be dissolved, it is an easy matter for it to do so if it is not forced to hang on in order to payoff a mortgage.. Nor are population shifts a problem, for the meeting places go wherever the families move.

The author adds these pungent words:

"We are given to understand that for the first 200 years after Christ, the Church never had special buildings of their own, and when at last they did, the art of exhortation degenerated into the issuing of commands."

What an incisive observation this is! Surely it is true that "the church in thy house" was a real fellowship of the Spirit, an experience of tender loving care, with attendance and collections no problem. Church house religion does issue forth a lot of commands, which usually have to do with maintaining "the System" that is inseparably wedded to the church plant. The folk must attend and must contribute in order to keep the thing going, and "the thing" is often far remote from what concerned the primitive saints.

Pethybridge sees the principle of "members one of another" crucial to understanding the secret of the power of pristine Christianity. The saints were not a collection of saved individuals, but rather members together in the Body of Christ, mutually building up one another in the faith. He is concerned about the hold the professional minister has over an entire group of believers. He says: "There is no suggestion of one man ministering to the whole group, but each is shown as having the privilege of possessing some spiritual gift,

and the responsibility to minister this gift to the rest of the local church, so that every believer is looked on as a minister to the rest."

Referring to modern research in education, he points to the fact that people usually learn little by merely listening. It is in sharing with others what one has learned that he really begins to master a subject. "This shows us the wisdom of God in planning the Church," the author observes, "not as a vast congregation of listeners, but as a small body sharing with each other what they learn from the Holy Spirit." He sees a mutual ministry in the exhortation: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16).

In applying these conclusions to our modern situation of having church plants that can hardly be forsaken overnight, Mr. Pethybridge offers suggestions similar to those that this journal has advocated for years. Believers should keep up their present connections with the established churches, he says, but let them practice the simple procedure of the early church in additional meetings in homes. He advises concerned disciples to invite a few loving hearts to their home, and to trust in the Lord to lead them to a closer walk in the Spirit. He believes such gatherings should practice the breaking of bread, a suggestion we have never made, believing as we do that this is a corporate act of the assembled congregation.

To be sure, Pethybridge believes that the effort to return to the house church must not be divisive. When at all possible, he advises, such a group should be started with the approval of the congregation leaders. Without such approval one should show great caution before going ahead anyway. "In any case, show Christian love and forbearance, and do not act or talk in a high-handed manner," he adds.

If the early church's great secret power is to be of influence in our churches today, our leaders must get with and find ways to implement these resources of spiritual vigor within organizational structures. With a little boldness and creative innovation the wonders of early Christianity can be repeated in our day. And this means far more than winning people to the faith. It means to bring them a life of joy in Jesus. It means to edify them and to give them a sense of belonging within the Body. It means to make them one in Christ together, allowing each one to contribute his own gifts to the building up of the church.

How would the following be for a creative change in a sizeable congregation?

Let the leadership divide the large congregation into units of 12 to 18 people. Assign them to weekly meetings in a classroom, perhaps twice a week, where they first experience the fellowship of knowing each other as brothers and sisters. They can share each other's victories and defeats and learn to pray together as a family. On Lord's day they can break bread together in their own mini-meeting, along with praise, prayer, and exhortation, all sharing together. Soon they can take on mercy projects all their own, reporting back to each other on their visits to shut-ins, the poor, and the imprisoned. They

can as a unit finance their own projects, sometimes of course in cooperation with other units in the congregation, while at the same time paying their part of the upkeep of the premises.

These meetings would be augmented by house gatherings, and here there would be special effort made to reach out to others with the gospel. Such home groups would surely multiply and Jesus would be glorified, with many serving as ministers of the word.

The auditorium (where the sanctuary will gather!) will be used often, even every Sunday, for mass meetings of various types. There can be the preaching of the gospel, with special effort made to make it meaningful or that purpose. There can be addresses by outstanding speakers, as well as songfests, special youth programs, missionary programs, social issues discussed by panels of experts, etc. But it would not be for the breaking of bread, for this will be observed in the various units where it can be done as the early church did it. Now, really, does it make sense to break bread in a large audience where a lot of the people are not even acquainted and hardly any of them know each other intimately as brothers and sisters?

The units could be put on a rotating basis, so that in time all members of the large congregation would be in a unit with every other member. The units would be provided with good leadership, each one having an elder to direct it perhaps. If the church chooses to have a professional staff, it could be assigned to minister mostly to the community, for the saints would not need any hired functionary. Indeed, with such a plan the members themselves would be effective witnesses to the community, which would greatly enhance the possibilities of a professional staff.

I am convinced that if our churches do not start some innovative effort like this they are going to be left behind. We must move from our dead center position as vast assemblies of listeners to smaller groups of sharers. It would be far better that we assemble for the breaking of bread “where two or three are gathered” than where two or three thousand are gathered. If we really want to find a way to move closer to the dynamic of the early saints, we can do it.

The collage on our cover, the work of Talmage Minter, is an artist’s effort to depict the great secret power of the Christian faith. Talmage wrote: “I hope that the radiating lines of this collage will symbolize the Christ-centered power and outreach of the church.” Perhaps this is the secret that Pethybridge is trying to reveal in his provocative tract. The powerful motivating force was, after all, the person of Jesus. The mission of the Spirit was to glorify Jesus. The house meetings were a communion with him, and being a member in the Body was an identification with him.

He is indeed the great secret of power, a power largely lost in the modern church. We must come to know him, not simply know about him. Once our resolve is to know him and to be conformed more and more to his image, we will find ways to let him have his way in

our lives and in the church. It is only the power of Jesus that will truly make the church his Body, "the fulness of him who fits all in all." —*the Editor*

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Count that day lost, whose low descending sun views from thy hand no worthy action done. —*Charles Stanford*

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A CHALLENGING THESIS AT ABILENE

I have been reading an M. A. thesis written by a student at Abilene Christian College that is really something else. One does not have to agree with all its conclusions in order to appreciate its candor and objectivity, its freedom from traditional thinking, and its bold attempt to discover truth and that alone. The student, Milo Richard Hadwin, and the graduate Bible faculty of the college are to be commended for turning out such a piece of work. Now that the thesis has been approved and deposited in the college library, we can feel free to write about it in this article.

Mr. Hadwin is concerned with the problem of New Testament examples as related to biblical authority. He recognizes that we have long been, influenced by that triad of direct commands, necessary inferences, and approved examples. He is taking a close look at the examples, and is asking if these do indeed stand as authoritative in the life and work of the church. He is aware that this problem underlies many of the controversies that have produced our numerous divisions. We have looked to this or that example in the scriptures, interpreting it according to this or that whim, and have insisted that all others follow our prescription at the pain of disfellowship.

He gives us a history of the idea that New Testament examples provide a pattern for the church, a notion that dates back at least to old Archelaus in 262 A. D. who insisted that believers must follow the Jerusalem church in the communal sharing of earnings and property. Others along the way have pointed to the laying on of hands, the holy kiss, and foot washing as patterns to be followed.

As for the Restoration Movement the notion of patternism in examples goes back to John Glas and Greville Ewing, precursors of the Campbells, who found authority in examples not only for weekly communion, but also for a plurality of elders and community of goods. Glas concluded that there must be a set order of worship, based upon Acts 2:42, and there is still a group within the Movement that makes this a test of fellowship.

James Alexander Haldane (1805) is quoted as saying what probably represents the thinking of our people to this day in reference to examples: “If we are not bound by the practices of the apostolic churches recorded in Scripture, there is no precise model whatever in the New Testament for the constitution and government of the church.”

Moving on to America the author shows that Stone “found that there was neither precept nor example in the New Testament” for some of his practices, and that Thomas Campbell wrote in the *Declaration and Address* that nothing should be required of a believer except what is expressly enjoined in the scriptures “either in express terms or by approved example.”

Beyond the Campbell-Stone days we have the likes of Tobert Fanning, J. W. McGarvey, and David King, the consensus continuing to be that “When we can determine, with even a good degree of probability, an apostolic custom, our own judgment should yield to it” (McGarvey).

Next comes many pages of review of the cooperation controversy that has raged in recent years, with views of everyone from J. D. Thomas and Thomas Warren to James W. Adams and Roy Cogdell. This feud centered in whether there was a scriptural example for the Herald of Truth radio program. But no one questioned that last prong of the triad, *approved example*. Each side presumed to find examples for their practice. J. D. Thomas in his book *We Be Brethren* has proved to be the most daring, for he listed 17 examples in scripture for his “pattern principle.” That is, he concludes that it is essential that we wear the name Christian because the disciples in Antioch were so designated (Acts 11:26), and in Acts 9:26-27 he finds authority for “placing membership,” for Paul desired to join himself to the Jerusalem church. But interestingly enough Acts 20:7, the usual prooftext for weekly communion, is not one of the seventeen. That was back in 1958. Thomas now tells the author of the thesis: “I have 17 such binding examples in my book. Some of them may be pretty thin. I would grant that. I read the New Testament through several times looking for those examples — it may be that I stretched a point here and there — I’m just as human as the next person and maybe I was hoping to find some.” No one can justly criticize that, for it sounds like a growing scholar. It only illustrates the problem that one has on his hands once he is in the maze of finding authority in *approved examples*. Each of us usually ends up doing his own approving!

Milo Hadwin takes issue with his Restoration forbears and his Abilene professors by concluding that “the specific teachings of the New Testament on examples and imitation does not seem to justify the conclusion that a pattern for the church regarding worship, government, discipline, and so forth is to be found in the actions of the primitive church.” Nor does he find grounds for believing that the Holy Spirit selected certain examples from among the many (he lists scores from one chapter alone) to be imitated? The scriptures make no such claim, he observes.

He thinks John Locke had a better eye for what is required than the Restoration heroes, whether yesterday's or today's. Said Locke: "Now, nothing in worship or discipline can be necessary to Christian communion but what Christ our legislator, or the Apostles by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have commanded in express words."

In this regard Hadwin gives crucial information. He points to the influence that Locke had upon the Campbells, noting that Thomas may well have borrowed .from this quotation in his *Declaration and Address.* But in specifying what should be required he added "approved precedent" to Locke's express command. Years later when telling of his first reading of his father's *Declaration,* Alexander Campbell said that he saw ambiguity in the term *approved precedent,* though none in *express terms.* Alexander made it clear that he did not look to the scriptures for an exact pattern for everything that the church does: "There is too much squeamishness about the *manner* of cooperation. Some are looking for a model similar to that which Moses gave for building the tabernacle. These seem not to understand that this is as impossible as it would be incompatible with the genius of the gospel."

Hadwin contends that there is an important difference between an example being approved and being necessary. Quoting Roy Cogdill's "When the apostles taught a thing or approved a practice engaged in by the church, it was prima facie evidence that Christ had commanded this," Hadwin proceeds to show that it does not follow that if Paul approved of something it means that Christ commanded it. The saints at Troas met in a third story chamber with Paul's apparent approval, but it hardly means that Jesus had commanded it. To be sure, Hadwin observes, a church *may* do what a primitive church did in a similar situation, but it does not follow that it *must* do so. Examples are therefore sometimes illustrations of what God has commanded, and this makes them important. And they provide us with encouragement and guidelines for our own mission. But this does not place them on the same level of authority with express commands.

He illustrates this with the story of Ananias and Saphira, who interpreted the example of their fellow saints of sharing all things common as binding upon themselves. It was *right* for them to sell their goods and do likewise, but it was not *required* that they do so. And so Peter says to them: "While it remained, did it not remain thine own?"

If examples cannot be made into laws, Hadwin says, then the absence of an example or the silence of scripture cannot be made a test. The Bible is silent about a lot of things, some of which we practice and others we don't, but the mere absence of an example for this or that (he includes instrumental music in his list) does not prove it to be wrong.

One illustration he uses to clarify his position is that of congregational autonomy, which we all cherish better than we practice. This is certainly not commanded, but it was probably the practice of the primitive churches. This example, he observes, shows us the acceptability of such an arrangement. It is *righ t* for congregations to be autonomous

because of the example, but since it is not an express command we cannot conclude that it would therefore be wrong to be other than autonomous. In view of our current *practice* it is a good thing!

He thinks the Restoration Movement would have been saved a lot of grief had it not foisted upon itself a pattern principle from the examples (or lack of examples) of the early church. If our brethren had never believed what the scriptures do not teach to start with, that is, that we must follow the examples of the early churches, then we would not have divided over the *absence* of an example for dividing into classes or the manner in which churches did or did not cooperate.

So he says, in further clarifying his point, the only time an example set by a New Testament church is binding upon us is when it can be proved that what they did was the result of an express command. He gains some support for his position from a surprising source, none other than Reuel Lemmons, editor of the *Firm Foundation:* "I believe that Bible authority rests solely on the revelational nature of the scriptures, and that dealing with necessary inference and approved examples involves the use of the human mind and, therefore, interpretation. Since no scripture is given for private interpretation, there is actually no Biblical ground for disfellowship in differences that are centered either in necessary inference or in approved example."

This kind of talk from Reuel is better understood when one realizes that he was talking to the non-cooperatives who disfellowship him over Herald of Truth. He was not talking to our Christian Church brethren whom he disfellowships over instrumental music! Unfortunately one's views on fellowship often depend on who is disfellowshipping whom at the time!

Hadwin emphasizes his thesis that *the fact that an action was done does not mean it had to be done.* And so *just as the presence of an example does not require,* so *the absence of an example does not forbid.* In view of all the *fuzzy* thinking that has gone on among us about examples, I have to admit that I find this refreshing.

He gives special attention to Acts 20:7, *the* passage that we have long used to teach that churches *must* observe weekly communion. Hadwin rejects this view, for there is no *command* to support this example. To the contrary, Jesus specified the time to be indefinite: "as often as yet eat this bread and drink the cup" (1 Cor. 11:26). Acts 20:7 may show that it is right for churches to use the first day in this way, but not compulsory.

He refers to the old "gopher wood" argument. God specified that wood, which excluded all other wood. So he specified the first day in the example of Acts 20:7, which excludes all other days. Hadwin correctly observes that God *commanded* Noah to use gopher wood, while there is no such command about communion on the first day.

He warns against universalizing a particular instance, such as requiring all churches to do exactly as Troas did according to Acts 20:7, quoting Campbell again: “It is bad logic to draw a general conclusion from any particular occurrence.”

So I say bully for Milo Richard Hadwin, a brother I do not yet know. I am surprised, but *pleasantly* surprised, that any student in our colleges would think so daringly in a Master’s thesis. He chose a problem and in good Socratic fashion pursued it wherever reason led him. What his church or his professors have always taught were beside the point. He allowed himself no conclusion that evidence did not support. He is an honest scholar, and while he may be a sectarian like most of the rest of us, he forgot his sectarianism while writing that thesis.

And three cheers for ACC and the graduate Bible faculty for approving the thesis (which of course does not imply agreement) and for depositing it in the college library for all to read. I see it as a significant gesture toward responsible scholarship.

And people wonder why I have hope for our future! —*the Editor*

True praise is frequently the lot of the humble; false praise is always confined to the great. —*Henry Home*

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UNITY IS GOD’S GIFT

Every good endowment and every perfect gift is *from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there* is *no variation or shadow due to change.* (Jas. 1:17)

A great truth like this is a good antidote against the ugly pride that is in us all. Whether it be our good fortune or good health, we like to assume that it is mostly our doing. We can become handsome, rich, articulate, successful, influential, and even the parents of bright and happy children, supposing all along that we get the credit. Pride is surely a grievous sin against God, and the medieval monks who came up with “the seven deadly sins” were right in giving pride first place. Some experts on sin (!) insist that all sin is basically pride, which is vicious enough to express itself in many ways. 1 Tim. 3:6 seems to be telling us that even Satan’s fall was due to his pride.

In these days of unity meetings and unity movements in our own ranks, not to mention ecumenicity at large, we must not allow our pride to assume that any of this is by our own power or wisdom. I have helped put together many unity conferences, dating back to the

time when the idea was almost unthinkable, and these have been more or less successful. I say *successful* advisedly, for this only means that they have been fairly well attended by disciples who have made some new adventures into brotherhood. It is a joy to bring people together who have not even been speaking to each other. I have seen men who would previously only debate one another in a bloody arena reach out in love and accept each other as brothers, sometimes embracing and weeping. We have sometimes had eight or ten different groups of "loyal brethren" in these forums, and how great it is to see them singing, praying, and studying together. To paraphrase the psalmist, it is like the aroma of an elegant aftershave daubed upon the face!

How vain it would be to view all such victories as anything other than one more precious gift from God. James speaks not only of *good* gifts but *perfect* gifts as well. This distinction may point to gifts that are benevolent in character, the *good* gifts that are such blessings to us, and gifts that are complete in every detail, the *perfect* gifts. A gift may of course be both, such as God's gift of a lovely wife. Ouida is certainly a bundle of benevolence to me in that "She doeth him good all the days of his life," and I must say that she is also a perfect gift in that she is all any man could ever want in a wife.

How true this is of unity among disciples. What is more tragic than a feuding church unless it is a divided church? Brothers in Christ that cannot even speak to each other on the street are a denial of all that they profess as followers of Jesus. Churches that have to parcel out their efforts according to the dictates of partyism, even in the mission field, do little more than to preserve a self-defeating program. How sad it is that so many yearning hearts want to reach out like Jesus and touch the untouchables, but they dare not if they expect to get along at home. Many a minister longs to say what he really believes and to accept those that he secretly acknowledges as his brothers, but he holds back in favor of sectarian pressure. And how cruel it is for us to drive God's sheep from one flock to another, insisting that if one is "faithful" then he must be with us and not with them. We even invade small towns with a "loyal church," to the embarrassment of our brethren who have carried out a labor of love in that town for several generations.

It is beautiful to see this change. Jesus is at work through his Spirit when men who have hated start loving. It is God in the hearts of men when they stop being bruisers and start being blenders. We may in our stumbling efforts provide the setting in which the Spirit can do his work, but let us never forget that this blessed and perfect gift of oneness between brothers who were once at war is from the Father. It is the Spirit's unity that we are to preserve in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), and not any kind of union that this forum or that conclave might cultivate in its own wisdom. It is folly to have a *plan* for unity unless that plan calls for a total reliance upon resources of the Spirit. Any other kind of unity would be futile anyway.

And it should occur to us that if, after all, unity is God's good and perfect gift, then He will dispense that gift in His own way and time. If unity is His to give and not ours to achieve, then we must take care in supposing that a congregation is one just because it has no open splits. Unity is a gut issue, reaching deep inside man, and has to do with the way he feels and acts toward his fellows. It has to begin with one's own relationship to God. If it is one of love rather than of fear, and trusting faith instead of nagging doubt, then he is ready to relate to his brother in the fellowship of the Spirit. People are not united just because they sit together in a building a few hours a week, nor even because they may agree on all the things they believe to be important. Unity is not simply the opposite of division. It rather has its own quality that is tied closely to the Father. God gives unity in giving His Spirit. The Spirit in turn cultivates the cohesive influence of love, joy, and peace. It is the bond of peace that preserves the Spirit's unity.

Despite its doctrinal unanimity, a church cannot be united if it does not have the Spirit of God. If it does have the Spirit of God, it cannot be divided. This means that believers might have considerable disparity in their thinking, and thus be "divided" in a looser sense of the term, and still be one in that the Spirit has made it so —like Peter and Paul! Some of our people have been both surprised and threatened in the presence of some Episcopalian or Roman Catholic with whom they experience more spiritual affinity than with the "right" folk back at the church. And they come to see that such ones give no more importance to being an Episcopalian or a Roman Catholic than we should give to being Church of Christ. God sees us as individuals, not as part of a religious community, and He deals with us accordingly. And when *He* deals with us and we respond obediently, then we are not only His, but we are brothers to all others who also respond. This is unity. We don't work for it nor do we create it. We simply recognize it and take the steps the Spirit has given to preserve it, which are "with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love" (Eph.4:2-3).

Preserving the unity that God has given comes also through prayer. Surely it would make a difference if our people all around the world would bombard the throne of God in agonizing prayer for the oneness of all believers. Rev. 5:8 refers to the prayers of saints as "golden bowls full of incense." which were held by the elders and the living creatures as they bowed down before the throne. Surely if those bowls overflowed with the incense of prayers for unity, God would take our concern to heart. But are we really concerned that much? Do our people seriously pray for unity? If we all prayed every day, like Jesus did, "that they might all be one," and asked to be used in making it so, we could look for things to happen.

Several years ago while visiting Westminster Abbey in London, I was impressed by a sign I noticed in a remote corner of that famous shrine. "Prayers for Christian Unity in this Chapel Every Tuesday at 3 P.M.," it read. Despite the supposition that I have long

harbored that God doesn't listen to Episcopalians anyhow, I was moved by this simple announcement. "I have never seen such a notice or heard such an announcement in any of our buildings back home," I thought to myself. If our Lord could make the unity of his followers a central concern in his high priestly prayer in the shadow of the cross, surely we can pray fervently that his prayer will be realized in us.

But back to the apostle's tender statement in James 1:17. Despite its simplicity it is beautifully profound. He sees every good and perfect gift as coming down from heaven to bless us. He calls God "the Father of lights," which is probably a reference to God's lordship over the heavenly bodies. It is an appropriate reference in view of the gift of unity. Astronomers and philosophers have long been impressed with the majestic unity of the heavenly system, the planets moving about as they do with precise timing. Plato believed he could build order and dignity into the lives of his disciples by having them study the brilliant disposition of the heavens. It may well be that a divided church needs to ponder the unity of the stars and planets, and then go and do likewise.

James sees God as the Ruler of the heavenly lights, and yet God is different from the sun in one important respect. He is not given to change as the sun is, which, because of the obstreperous earth, casts its shadow variably. But in God, unlike the sun, there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God never leaves us in the dark as the sun does half the earth at a time. God is always the same, at all seasons of the year, and for all our lifetime. His sameness reaches back into all of eternity, long before there was any earth. The sun, for all its glory, does cast shadows. But it is as if God stood as the sun in the meridian at high noon, never casting any shadow.

The good endowment of unity and the perfect gift of fellowship are for us if we really choose to walk in His light. There is really no excuse for the darkness of faction and partyism. —*the Editor*

Where all think alike, no one thinks very much. —*Walter Lippmann*

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PRIMITIVE WORSHIP LIKE A VICTORY CELEBRATION

In a publication issued by the United Church of Christ, Prof. Harvey Cox of Harvard describes early Christian worship in these words:

> The earliest gatherings of the followers of Jesus … lacked the cultic solemnity of most contemporary worship. These Christians gathered for what they called the breaking of bread —that is, the sharing of a common meal.
>
> They had bread and wine, recalled the words of Jesus, read letters from the apostles and other groups of Christians, exchanged ideas, sang, and prayed. Their worship services were rather uproarious affairs — more like the victory celebrations of a football team than what we usually call worship today.

We can better appreciate Cox's illustration of a football victory celebration now that George Allen and the Washington Redskins have won their place in the sun. Not only do George and his team pray together (even before TV cameras'), but they are uninhibited in their display of joy over a big victory. When he and his players beat Dallas and gained a place in the Super Bowl, they wept and laughed, danced and jumped, kissed and embraced, tousled each other's hair and sprayed champagne. In his remarks on TV George was the epitome of ecstatic joy. He was shouting glory.

TV coverage did not burden us with the gloom of the Cowboy dressing room. News coverage indicated that it was funereal. The unsmiling Tom Landry was even more unsmiling. The players were all undone. There was a solemn air, no place for one in search of joy.

But which of these two dressing room scenes is more like the typical church service in our time? The question makes a place for Cox's observation that primitive worship was more like a football victory celebration than what we usually call worship today.

Cox's point may go far beyond a surface observation. Even the scriptures use athletic contests to illustrate weighty truths. Meaningful victory is the result of discipline, hard work, and sacrifice. One foot ball coach made the surprising statement that he did not want his team to gain points solely through the errors of the opponent, for this seemed to dull the razor-edge discipline so long in cultivation. Victory is sweeter when it follows a fierce struggle with the enemy. If the Washington team now basks in the joys of the limelight, it is only because they knew the despair of darkness and defeat. It is probably true that real joy is always in some way related to hardship and difficulty.

The story along this line told by the Harvard great, William James, has always impressed me. The professor took an extended vacation at Lake Chautauqua, where there was fine music, orderliness, sobriety, intelligence, prosperity and cheerfulness, but no real problems. After a few days he was bored with it all, wanting to get back in the thick of Harvard's ongoing world, which is not always so quiet. He concluded from this experience that it is the element of precipitiousness —the intensity and danger — that makes life worth living.

James applied this kind of thinking to academic life, insisting that students in college need to rub shoulders with the big outside world with all its sin and suffering. These words from his pen are about university life, but we can read then as applicable to our churches:

> These excellent fellows need contact of some sort with the fighting side of life, and with the world in which men and women earn their bread and butter and live and die; there must be the scent of blood, so to speak, upon what you offer them, or else their interest does not wake up; the blood which is shed in our electives, fails to satisfy them very long.

James wrote an essay on *The Moral Equivalent of War,* highly influential back in 1910, that the modern church would do well to study. War gives us manhood, valor, hardness; and it is such martial value, he insisted that are the enduring cement on which societies are built. Since war is cruel and inhumane, we must look for its equivalent in moral efforts to conquer nature for the good of society. And so he said: “The military ideals of hardihood and discipline could be brought into the growing fiber of the people, without the callowness, cruelty and degradation that are the inevitable accompaniment of war.” James could have appreciated the fact that the scriptures describe the believer’s experience as that of a soldier in a war against the forces of evil. This is indeed the God-given equivalent to carnal warfare, for the saints are forever a part of the great conflict whose spiritual weapons are mighty before God and invincible to man.

This is where the joy comes in. The early saints were jubilant because it was their faith that overcame the world. They were disciplined and toughened through those tribulations that one must experience if he enters into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). And so Paul could say in 1 Thess. 3:4: “For when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction; just as it has come to pass, and as you know.” But he could say to the same church: “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For you are our glory and joy.” (1 Thess. 2:19-20)

If, as Harvey Cox has suggested, the early saints shared something of a victory celebration in their corporate worship, it was because they really believed that they were the winners in a heroic struggle with the world. This is why joy can never be a smug satisfaction with one’s experiences or a superficial happiness over one’s religion. It is rather that disciplined assurance that all is well and that we are part of a victorious community amidst a rebellious world that must finally surrender to the will of God. This calls for a life of praise and thanksgiving, and in a community situation it will be of such a character as to be likened to a football celebration.

Recent studies in early Christian worship have turned up important sources in the book of Revelation, especially in reference to hymns or poetry sung or chanted in the assembly. Oscar Cullman in his *Early Christian Worship* finds five or six such old hymns, and they

do tell us something about worship as celebration. One is in Rev. 5:9 where the saints sang with the heavenly choir: “Worthy art thou to take the scroll and open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

This is especially touching in that John weeps when there was no one to open the seals. The apostle was eager to know of the future victory of God’s people, so when the Lamb appears as worthy to unfold her future, John shares in the chants of joy. He heard not only the elders and the living creatures with their harps, but myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of angels, crying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” This is indeed a victory celebration.

Another is in Rev. 19:1-6 where the saints are joyful over God’s victory over Babylon the great harlot. “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” The saints, like the heavenly chorus, sing on: “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, pure and bright.”

When it is remembered that *Revelation* was written at a time when the church was terribly persecuted, which explains why much of its teaching is veiled in symbols the Roman authorities would not understand, these chants of victory take on more meaning. It was a mighty chorus that sang *loudly* its assurance of victory. The saints made these their songs of joy and exultation.

Our modern assemblies may lack this spirit and be more like the gloom of a defeated community because we are too much a part of the world against which we are suppose to be at war. We hardly have the vision of a *pilgrim* community. Unlike Jesus, who *tabernacled* in this world, we have that secular spirit that assumes that the glory of this world is the most of what God has to offer. So we can hardly meet together as warring soldiers who are out to change the world for Jesus’ sake rather than conforming to it for our own sake. How can we sing of victory when there has been no war?

Too, the victory celebrations of the primitive community were spontaneous, which points to a freedom that we have not yet attained in our assemblies. No one then said, “Brother Gaius will now praise God.” That would be something like George Allen calling upon one of his victorious Redskins to be happy! It is as unnatural as it would be for a child to be formal in reference to his Daddy around the supper table. A free and happy child will spontaneously show joy, with little thought given to procedure or protocol. It is this family atmosphere that we must in some way restore to our assemblies. We are more

concerned with form and ritual than with a spontaneous overflow of the joy of the Holy Spirit.

The great lost secret of the early church was the spontaneous power that was generated in their informal home gatherings where they encouraged one another in the struggle against sin.

When we realize that we are at war together against a common enemy, and that the Captain of our salvation has given us certain victory under his banner, then our assemblies will be more celebration than they will be deliberation. —*the Editor*

All power is trust. —*Disraeli*

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TO UNITY IN DIVERSITY, WITH LOVE

Bruce Heffner

Just as ways were sought to end the Vietnam War, at least our participation in it, we too should continually re-evaluate our past and present positions in hope of finding a solution which will bring us together in a spirit of love. This will require a search of both the book and the heart.

Barton W. Stone once said: “I wish it to be known that I shall never be an angry disputant, even in Reformation. It is possible to be too strict, too censorious, too confident; to feel that we have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And when we have that attitude, we become debaters, rather than searchers for the truth.”

It would do us good to think about that comment and it’s relation to the Christian community. We need to learn how to search the scriptures while at the same permitting others to do the same and account to them an integrity equal to ours.

Obviously this means that unity in diversity is not only pragmatic but the only unity possible. Those who maintain otherwise are simply ignoring reality.

Love such as the Master had for us is the key to the end of our squabbling. Nothing can be so conquering as love, and yet the word defies description except as it dwells in the hearts of changed men and women.

The person of Jesus in our life is critical to the expression of love. The life that he lived and the cross which he bore on our behalf may boggle the mind but it also touches the heart, The Christian understands that love because he is made part of it when he comes into vital union with the Father through Jesus.

The Apostle John wrote: “God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into this wicked world to bring to us eternal life through his death. In this act we see what real love is: it is not our love for God, but his love for us when he sent his son to satisfy God’s anger against our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian executed by the Nazis on April 9, 1945, in the concentration camp at Flossenburg, said that spiritual love does not originate in the person but is from above.

“Human love can never understand spiritual love, for spiritual love is from above; it is something completely strange, new, and incomprehensible to all earthly love,” he said.

Bonhoeffer captured the concept of love as few of us have. He recognized not only that it was a force outside himself but also that the force became a dynamic through earthen vessels as they submitted their lives to the kingship of Jesus.

As we take a fresh look at our traditional views, it must be coupled with a closer look at ourselves and where we stand in relation to our brethren. If the heart is receptive to the idea, the intellectual hurdles will be few.

The vehicle in which unity rides is constructed on an understanding of how Jesus loved us. Reflecting on the debt which Jesus paid, we must consider its meaning in relation to our brothers and sisters in Jesus.

Again quoting from Bonhoeffer: “As only Christ can speak to me in such a way that I may be saved, so others, too, can be saved only by Christ himself. This means that I must release the other person from every attempt of mine to regulate, coerce, and dominate him with my love.”

He suggests that the other person needs to retain his independence and that he needs “to be loved for what he is, as one for whom Christ became man, died, and rose again, for whom Christ bought forgiveness of sins and eternal life.”

Here rest most of our problems between one another. It is not enough that we should study the Word and teach others, but often that we demand of them a perfection of which even we ourselves are incapable.

In view of our humanness, the question may be asked whether it can be otherwise, and in reply to that I believe a further comment by Bonhoeffer is in order. “Because Christ has long since acted decisively for my brother, before I could begin to act, I must leave him his freedom to be Christ’s; I must meet him only as a person that he already is in Christ’s eyes. This is the meaning of the proposition that we can meet others only through the mediation of Christ.”

These views were discussed with an editor of a “mainline” Church of Christ publication who promptly discounted them with a swift remark that if Bonhoeffer’s concept were carried to its ultimate end it would be impossible to correct an erring brother. I believe the point was missed. Bonhoeffer was suggesting not that we abandon our

brother in need of spiritual help and guidance but rather that we need to take care that the doors of our hearts are open so that Christ is able to work through us in the perfecting of the body —that's what spiritual love is all about.

Bonhoeffer was merely elucidating a principle set forth by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:4-6: "Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustices but rejoices whenever truth wins out."

Contrary to what some believe, Bonhoeffer's concept of letting your brother belong to Jesus, does not fling open the door to all the carnal mind desires. It does not promote permissiveness, not is it void of values.

Bonhoeffer was able to see himself through the eyes of Jesus and consequently when he looked at his brethren, he also saw them through the eyes of Jesus. The cross exemplifies what it means to love with the heart, mind and soul.

Jesus, having suffered the ultimate calamity of the human life, understands our hangups, breathes into our life the strength and vitality necessary to cope with the everyday problems of life.

Success in the Christian life is too often tied to various ecclesiastical edicts arbitrarily defined. We are beginning to understand that living for the Master involves more than dying in a church pew with cold feet, calloused rears and blank minds.

Christianity need not be drudgery! We can love one another fervently and overlook one another's faults as we walk the pathway to heaven together, but it takes total commitment to Jesus in order to do so.

Perhaps the most popular quotation from Bonhoeffer cited by university and college students is "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die," from Bonhoeffer's book, *The Cost of Discipleship.*

But what does that mean? Bonhoeffer said: "The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus. The call to follow implies that there is only one way of believing in Jesus Christ, and that is by leaving all and going with the incarnate Son of God."

Bonhoeffer so adequately draws the pieces of our inheritance together by defining Christian brotherhood as not being "an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate." *—Box 24, Ft. Collins, Co. 80521*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

The *Christian Chronicle*, one of our media out of Nashville, announces that the office of public information of the United Nations has approved the Church of Christ as a non-government organization of that body. It is no particularly big deal, but it does allow some of our workers access to the UN facility in New York. I noted that in this particular news item we were referred to consistently as Churches of Christ with the capital "C", while the rest of the news stories just as consistently reverted to the more kosher small "c". The small "c" is the rule with us because of our claim to be undenominational. I presume that in the United Nations application we were suddenly transformed from churches of Christ to Churches of Christ, a kind of flirtation with denominational status. Logic would have it that if a group bears a *distinctive* name and is indeed *named*, then it has to be a denomination, for that is what the term means. If we choose to be undenominational, then we have to be unnamed. I am not nearly as interested in our being undenominational, which is probably well nigh impossible, as I am in our being nonsectarian, which is certainly ours for the asking.

In the *Houston Post* of July 16 an Associated Press story told of how Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Boone, of Nashville, were withdrawn from by the Granny White Church of Christ over a year ago, but only now made public. They are the parents of Pat Boone, who sometime earlier was excluded from the fellowship of the Inglewood congregation in California, along with his wife Shirley. The news release said the reason for Mr. and Mrs. Boone's exclusion was that they "strayed from the plain teachings of the Bible," according to the church. Archie Boone was a lifetime member of the Granny White church, serving as deacon 24 of his 60 years of membership. The press may not yet know that Margie Corlew, Pat's sister who lives in Dyersburg, Tenn., has also been withdrawn from by the Church of Christ where she has been a member, along with her husband. Margie must be an alert gal, for when the elders approached her with a list of questions to be answered, she responded with, "What grade do I have to make to pass?" All the Boones are convinced that the family is being driven from the church for one basic reason: sympathy for Pat and Shirley. And if you want to get a divorce, whether from your wife or a brother in the Lord, you can always find a reason. I view all this as sheer ecclesiastical madness, an insanity that is not even mentioned among Baptists and Methodists. The way our people have treated the Boones is a disgrace that makes Watergate look like a fifth grade spit-wad fight.

Canon Leonard Schiff of Birmingham, England has written in *Expository Times* of how Mahatma Gandhi has changed our thinking in the twentieth century. His approach to life was a simple one and yet he became a vital part of some of the weightiest issues of our age. Impressed by the Sermon on the Mount and the role of Jesus as an aggressive non-violent reformer, he moved close to Christianity, though he always looked to Hinduism as his faith. Yet there is that religion that transcends all systems, he said, and this is the

permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself and its Maker. But religion can never be a private matter, for to purify ourselves we must purify our surroundings. So he involved himself in politics though at heart he was non-political. In these days of Watergate these words from Gandhi take on special meaning: “If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake, from which one cannot get out, no matter how much he tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake. I have been experimenting with introducing religion into politics.”

He was a man of humor. A female devotee tried to touch his garment. He responded by boyishly pulling her nose, assuring her that he was no god, but adding, “If the truth were known I am tempted more than most men, but perhaps less than those who are sinners.” He was touched by Newman’s hymn *Lead Kindly Light* and thought that line “One step enough for me” to be his rule of life. Schiff thinks he changed our century mainly in terms of social pluralism, religious diversity and race-prejudice. His insistence on detachment and non-possession is also a positive challenge to our acquisitive society.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Two of the four people below have been reading our copies quite regularly, but have never got around to subscribing, so we will start them off, just as someone, unknown to us, started us off awhile ago. *—Charles Wheeler, 20911 Pepper Tree Lane, Cupertino, Ca. 95014.*

(Many of our readers are now with us because someone thought to start them off with a subscription. This is how our paper grows. We have no promotional program, and so we depend wholly upon the willingness of our readers to pass along the good word. Our prices make it easy for you to do this: 5 names for 5.00. Just send us the names and we’ll do the mailing from here. *—Ed.*)

Julius J. Michini, who ministers to the Summer St. Church in Lucedale, Ms., would like to conduct weekend meetings with congregations or groups that might be in need of his services. He is a free man in Christ who would like to serve like minded people. His address: Rt. 4, Box 234, Lucedale, Ms. 39452.

Our congregation has put a dent in the myth that tongues are divisive. We are growing in depth and inclusiveness as love escalates. We do not pretend to be a unique island of unity in a sea of turmoil on this issue, but we are grateful for the peace God has given us. *—Barry Willbanks, First Christian Church, 233 Topaz, Redwood City, Ca. 94062*

Amen on your article concerning anti-church raps. As one who has been guilty of such lack of faith activities, I think it worthwhile for you to point to such pitfalls. We believe you are also correct about how when one leaves a problem situation he is no longer in a position to help change it. Quitters never win until they quit quitting. — *Rich Thornhill, Grundy, Va.*

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OFFICE NOTES

Our friend and brother Perry Gresham, 19 years president of Bethany College, has a new book on *Campbell and the Colleges*, which was first given as lectures at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville. It makes for good Restorationana for those who are collectors. Perry talks about all the colleges, whether Independent, Disciple, or Church of Christ, though much of his concern is with Campbell's philosophy and the emergence of Bethany College. He does, by the way, make a list of *all* the colleges. He asked me for a list of the Church of Christ institutions, and now that I see it in print, I can think of none that we left out. If you are interested in Campbell and in education among our people, then you'll appreciate this volume, especially the chapters on "Campbell and Education" and "Campbell's Bethany." 3.75.

For .95 we will send you *The View from a Hearse* by Joseph Bayly, which sets forth the Christian attitude toward death. It is highly worth reading, for it discusses death in its true colors, whether of birds, animals or people. The author lost a five-year-old to leukemia, which he draws upon resourcefully without sentimentality. He talks about what dying is like, how to comfort, prayer and terminal illness (including calling elders to anoint), privacy in death, and in hope "Beyond the Tunnel."

Gifts and Ministries by Arnold Bittlinger is a highly resourceful little volume that seeks to relate gifts (charismata) to ministries. God has given the church various ministries and he gives individuals various gifts, so the author argues that these must go together if the kingdom is to be spread. To exercise a ministry, such as a teaching pastor, without regard for the gifts that may accompany this, is but to fail. It works the other way too. 1.95. dope, but "The Miracle Tools" really makes the book. 1.95.

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